

Culture

Instrument families

Learning objectives

- The students learn about different types of instruments, how they work and what kind of sound they make.
- In the project stage, the students use this information to describe an instrument.

Useful vocabulary

blow drums fingerboard flute hole
maracas pipe skin squeeze strings
trumpet violin

Preparation

You could download and bring to class some recordings and videos of instruments. Put 'strange musical instruments' into YouTube to get some fun examples. Bring in three or four glass bottles if you do the extension activity in 3 below. If the students are going to do the project in class, they will either need access to the internet or books.

Warmer

Play *Name that word!* Give the definition of a word – don't make it too complete – and see which student can name it in the fewest number of letters supplied by you. For example:

Teacher: It's an animal which is black and white.

Student 1: I'll name it in two.

Teacher: Z-E

Student 1: Zebra?

Teacher: Yes.

Teacher: It's a sport where you swim, cycle and run.

Student 2: I'll name it in four.

Teacher: T-R-I-A

Student 2: Triathlon?

Teacher: Yes.

Teacher: It's a musical instrument and you blow into it.

Student 3: I'll name it in one.

Teacher: F

Student 3: Sorry, I don't know.

Teacher: Anyone else?

Student 4: I'll name it in three.

Teacher: F-L-U

Student 4: Flute?

Teacher: Yes.


After you demonstrate, arrange the students into groups to play. They get 5 points for getting the word in 1 letter, 4 points in 2 letters, etc. The player with the most points wins the game.

- Ask the students if they can play any instruments. Ask how many different ways students can think of to play a musical instrument (hit, blow, etc. – they can demonstrate if they don't know the words in English).

Tell the students to match the phrases with the pictures.

Answers

hit the drums c
blow air into a bag a
blow air into a hole b
squeeze the bag a
cover holes (with your fingers) a, b
move the strings d

-  2.07 Play the recording. The students listen and say if they know the instruments and where they are from.

Answers

a bagpipes; Scotland b flute; China c drum; Japan
d guitar; Spain

Extension activity

Ask what students think are the earliest musical instruments.

Answer

The earliest musical instruments were probably various forms of drums, used to add sound to dancing and for religious reasons rather than entertainment. Instruments that blow air, like flutes, followed to give a more complex sound in more complex social events. An important development was instruments which allow different sounds to be played at the same time, like xylophones and stringed instruments such as harps.

- The students read the text and match the pictures. Make sure they use the glossary.

Answers

1 c 2 a 3 d 4 b

Extension activity

Put four glass bottles on the table. One should be empty, one full of water, one a third full and the other two thirds full. Hit each bottle with a pencil and ask the students *Is the sound the same?* (no) Explain, in the students' language if necessary, that this is because the amount of air in the bottle affects the acoustics, i.e. the sound.

- 4 Make sure the students know the meaning of *made of* by asking what some things around the classroom are made of. They then read the text again and say what each instrument is made of.

Arrange the students into pairs to demonstrate to each other how the instrument is played. They could do the sound effects too!


Answers

- 1 taiko drum: wood and skin
- 2 scottish bagpipes: the bag is made of animal skin (and the pipe is made of wood)
- 3 flamenco guitar: wood (and the strings are made of nylon)
- 4 Chinese flute: wood

- 5 Ask the students how many instrument families there are in the pictures (three: bagpipes, drum, stringed instruments). Tell the students to look at the pictures, describe them and say which family is missing.

Answers

The flute family is missing.

- 6  2.08 Tell the students to listen to the interview and number the instruments/pictures in the order the speaker talks about them.

Answers

- 1 bagpipes
- 2 Irish pipes
- 3 talking drum
- 4 Cajon
- 5 balalaika
- 6 banjo


Audioscript

Bagpipes, drums and guitars all come from very big families!

Let's think about the bagpipes first. Most people think of Scottish bagpipes but there are pipes from other countries, too. There is one that has a bag which looks like a sheep, with legs! The one in the picture comes from France. It's also possible to play bagpipes without blowing them. Players make the air for the pipes by squeezing a bag under their arm, like these ones from Ireland.


There are many different kinds of drums. People play some with sticks and some with their hands. One drum, from Ghana, is called a talking drum. Players hold the drum under their arms and squeeze it at the same time as they hit the skin with a stick. Look at the other drum. It's from Peru and is called a cajon because it looks like a box. Players sit on the drum and hit it with their hands.

There are many instruments around the world from the same family as the Spanish guitar. The balalaika has got a triangular body and only three strings. The one in this picture comes from Russia. The banjo is also part of the guitar family. It can have four, five or even six strings. It has a round body which is covered with plastic or skin. The one in the picture is from the United States.

- 7  2.08 Play the recording again for the students to write the countries.

Answers

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Uilleann pipes – Ireland | Talking drum – Ghana |
| Cajon – Peru | Bagpipes – France |
| Banjo – United states | Balalaika – Russia |

- 8  2.09 Play the recording for the students to guess the instrument.

Ask which one they think has the nicest sound.

Answers

- 1 banjo
- 2 balalaika
- 3 cajon

Extension activity

Ask the students about regional or national instruments in their country, what their name is, what they look like and how they are played.

Project

- As preparation, revise some of the key vocabulary from the lesson, for example, pretend to play various instruments and ask how you are playing it.
- Arrange the students into groups. Tell them to choose one of the instruments and write about it, including pictures and a recording of the sound. Stronger groups could find out something about the history of their instrument.
- Make sure that the instruments are divided roughly equally amongst groups so that there is some variety. You could let the groups choose a different instrument they are interested in. For any groups who find choosing their own instrument difficult, the teacher can suggest they focus on the flute family and build on the ideas from Exercises 1, 2 and 3.
- Individual students find out the information and get pictures and, if possible, recordings at home. In class they compare information, choose the best material and put it together into a presentation.
- The students listen to one another's presentations in class.

Cooler

Play a lexical version of musical chairs. Arrange the students in a circle around a line of chairs. There should be one chair fewer than the number of students. You read out a lexical set, for example Clothes, Sport, Food, and the students circle the chairs. Example (Music): *play, sound, instrument, drum, strings ...* When you say a word not in the lexical set, for example, *mouse*, the students have to sit down on a chair. The student left without a chair is out. Take away a chair and repeat with a new lexical set. Continue until there is only one student left. For a larger class and/or a quieter activity, read out words in a lexical set including one, two or three odd-words-out and the students have to write down the odd-words-out. They change sheets and mark one another's answers.